5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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621 fought each other and one was sometimes reduced to a subordinate
622 position by the other. Such subordinate or minor chiefs did not always lose all power, some men often continued to live with them, but not many, for they were poor and could not afford the feasts that prosperous and powerful chiefs gave to their warriors. Nowadays the junior of the two young chiefs, in the majority of cases, becomes subordinate to his brother immediately, for the Administration normally recognizes the senior of the two only, and a salary is paid to him alone on the old chief's death.

The number of villages which "come out" with each young chief usually varies between four and eight. But if a chief is subsequently reduced to a minor position he will often end his life with one village only
[624] of adult men and one village of their sons. For people move from minor chiefdoms and the depleted villages that are left gradually coalesce under the leadership of one of the great-commoners. The son of a minor chief may succeed to his father's position, but only one son will do so; a minor chiefdom is too small to be divided and has no formal "coming out" of its own; its young men attend the "coming out" of the superior chiefdom.

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423 So much in outline for the political constitution of the separate Nyakyusa chiefdoms. Some account of it was a necessary preface to the discussion of individual land rights, since it is within this political structure that they have validity. If, for example, the boundaries of a village are changed at the "coming out"—and they very frequently are—then no individual rights to village land can be maintained outside the new boundaries.

631 Prior to the arrival of the Europeans there was no paramount political authority among the Nyakyusa, but a number of tiny independent chiefdoms side by side, with minor chiefdoms in some cases attached to them. Of these traditionally independent chiefdoms there is none, I think, which to-day exceeds 3,000 adult male members, and most of them are far smaller than that. This smallness of scale, which is difficult at first for a European to grasp, is the fundamental characteristic of primitive society, in the organization of which personal relationships are predominant, wherein social relationships, that is, mainly subsist between personal acquaintances. In the old Nyakyusa polity impersonal relationships, effective social bonds linking together men who were personally unknown to one another, though they existed had relatively little importance.

●648 Just south of the Nyakyusa, in what is now North Nyasaland, live
184 the Ngonde[1] people, whose language and culture was and is very similar to that of the Nyakyusa. They were, however, slightly more civilized in that they were in closer contact with Arab and Swahili ivory traders; and

[1] Better known to Europeans as *Konde*.

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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the wealth derived from this trade enabled one of their chiefs, Kyungu, to maintain himself as paramount over all Ngonde. Among his people impersonal relationships thus had a greater importance. And it was, I believe, the historical isolation of the Nyakyusa from any considerable commercial contact with the outside world which prevented the rise among them of a paramount chief.

To-day the Nyakyusa are in process of integration with the civilized society of the world and the independence of their minute chiefdoms has inevitably passed away. The traditionally sovereign chiefs have been grouped in seven court districts with one chief as President of the Native Court in each ; and these seven chiefs together with the two Presidents of the Ndali and Lambya Courts are federated, with an Appeal Court and joint Native Treasury of their own. In the seven Native Courts most of the traditionally sovereign chiefs are entitled to sit with their great-commoners, and assist the President and his great-commoners in the hearing of cases. The bulk of the legal business previously transacted by each chief in his own country is now taken to Court, but the power of great-commoners to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system.

A poll tax, now (1938) fixed at 9/- per annum for adult males with no additional tax for plural wives, has been introduced and chiefs are paid small salaries ranging from 5/-, 10/- or 20/- a month for ordinary chiefs to 80/- or 100/- a month for the Court Presidents.

The Nyakyusa, as we have previously mentioned, consist of a number of immigrant groups who have spread among and incorporated an indigenous population. The main immigrant groups were three in number and are distinguished to-day by the names of " Nyakyusa," " Kukwe " and " Selya." As all these three groups together (including those who are now incorporated in them) call themselves " Nyakyusa " to the outside world, I distinguish the one group to which the name more particularly belongs as the " Nyakyusa proper." The Nyakyusa proper live in the plain of Mungonde and up on the higher ground as far north as Tukuyu, the Kukwe live north of them around the base of Rungwe Mountain while the Selya live in the east of the district, between the Nyakyusa proper and the Kukwe, right under the wall of the Livingstone Mountains. Between the three groups there are minor differences of dialect and custom.

The extent to which the indigenous groups retain any separate identity varies in accordance with the number of the immigrants and the date at which they reached them, but over a large part of the district fusion has been complete.

We have already discussed the economic relations between the Nyakyusa and the Lupa gold fields which provides them with a market

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyafyale*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1930). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassander* (1902). *Das Deutsche Njassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Atlas* (1906).

N 101 131 [184] N 642 N 173 N [167] N [563] N 144 N 173 N K 171 [648] [113]

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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789 751 754 [753] are said to give their wives a medicine (without their knowledge) which will cause any man who lies with them to fall ill of gonorrhoea or some other venereal disease. Many Christians believe in this medicine and some inquired whether Europeans did not use it also. One family of doctors are specialists in it:

[791] The sons of Manyafu are very famous, they are great doctors. People fear them very much. No one can steal anything belonging to them or run off with their wives. If a man runs off with a wife of theirs, he will return their wife and pay. . . . Because when he has slept with the woman by night they stink in each other's nostrils, the woman stinks in the face of the man and he likewise in hers. And if rain falls by night the roof comes off the hut in which they sleep and the rain enters. Perhaps the man quarrels with the woman, perhaps frogs and snakes are numerous, perhaps gourds sprout in the house—sometimes they sprout bringing evil. So it is also if a man has run off with the wife of another and the husband goes to the sons of Manyafu. They agree to work, but he must pay them.

[681] Lyandileko, whose husband's family have owned a 'horn' for generations, was very insistent that vengeance magic maintained law and order for it could injure only the guilty. 'A thief feared to steal lest he be caught by my father-in-law (Mwaisyelage). He feared the horn if he used sorcery. He feared to seize another's cow thinking, "They will go to Mwaisyelage".'

[684] And protective medicines which cause an adulterer to fall ill of gonorrhoea, or a thief to die, are considered perfectly legitimate; the misfortune would not have befallen the man unless he had done wrong.

[648] The prohibition by the government of the *mwafi* oracle has puzzled people. Medicines are admittedly dangerous, but it is held that Europeans 'encourage' witches and sorcerers by forbidding the use of the one effective weapon against them, and doctors with vengeance magic or other strong medicines 'fear the fate of the *mwafi* doctors'. There is an inescapable contradiction here, the Nyakyusa relying on *mwafi* and vengeance magic as a means of discovering criminals, and the Europeans punishing any doctor found administering poison, or intimidating people by threats. Furthermore, it is widely believed that Europeans themselves use strong medicines made up with blood. Any Europeans without an obvious occupation are suspect of being *abanyambuta*, who go around killing people and taking their blood for the Government to use for medicines. One of our European friends,

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9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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CHAPTER XII

PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

(a) THE GROWTH OF A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

With the arrival of European missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century[1] a new set of religious ideas was introduced and a new form of social grouping established. The early missionaries settled on land which they bought from various chiefs and gathered round them workers and refugees—the survivors of slave-raids in neighbouring areas—many of whom gradually became converts. In BuNyakyusa a new type of village, a Christian village, was established on mission land and the converts who occupied it were largely withdrawn from the authority of the chief, looking instead to the missionary as their leader. In Ngonde the development was rather different. The converts were not gathered on mission land but stayed in their own villages, where they were expected to spread the gospel among their neighbours. The difference was partly due to a difference in policy between the Scottish mission operating[2] in Ngonde, and the Moravian and Lutheran[3] missions operating in BuNyakyusa, but it was emphasized by differences in the history of the two areas. In Ngonde the missionaries became the allies of the Ngonde against the Arab slavers, whereas in BuNyakyusa there was no such alliance. The Scottish mission deliberately sought to convert and train the traditional leaders, and so gain the whole community, whereas the Moravians and Lutherans preferred to withdraw their converts from the surrounding pagan community.[4]

The number of converts increased much more rapidly in Ngonde than in BuNyakyusa, but after forty years of missionary activity the structural pattern was growing similar. More and more

[1] For an account of the first contacts of the Nyakyusa and Ngonde with Europeans, and bibliography on it, cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 81-1, 275-6.

[2] The Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland which later united with the Church of Scotland. It is still referred to in Ngonde as 'Free Church'.

[3] The Berlin Society (Berlin I).

[4] For an admirable account of the development of mission policy in East Africa, see Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (1952). Dr. Oliver describes the withdrawal of converts on to mission stations as typical of the *first* phase of mission activity and this is true for the Moravian and Lutheran missions, but Christians in Ngonde were never so withdrawn.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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their wives took to wearing cloth they should earn it for themselves by growing and selling millet and brewing beer, and many women do the clearing and hoeing in their fields, work that used to fall to men; but it is difficult for a chief to refuse to provide a man to hoe the ridges in his wife's field, or to refuse an elderly woman a cloth or some salt, and young heirs grumble much about their encumbrances.

In the political field there has been a sustained attempt to make local government more democratic and to include in it the educated men. Between 1891, when the German Government first assumed control of the area, and 1938, the tendency was for the power of the chiefs to be increased at the expense of that of the commoners. This was admitted by the chiefs themselves, as we have seen. In 1949 there was established a system of Rural Councils, on which chiefs, village headmen (*amafumu*), and ordinary commoners are represented. Four[1] of each category are chosen as representatives on the Council in their area by an electoral college itself elected by all taxpayers. Rungwe District is divided into five areas. The policy of treating some chiefs as senior to others has been abandoned and each of the seventy-eight recognized rulers (*abatwa*) is eligible for election as a chief's representative on his local Rural Council. Village headmen (two from each chiefdom) and the ordinary commoners are similarly chosen. The five Rural Councils in turn elect one man of each sort to the District Council.[2] The system allows for, and seems to have achieved, a combination of men with traditionally high status and those who are conspicuous by reason of their education or success as coffee or rice farmers. The old feeling that education was not necessary to a chief's son, though it might be useful to a poor man, has vanished, and a considerable number of the educated leaders of the district are sons or grandsons of chiefs. The elected president of the District Council, Mr. Gordon Mwansasu (186) is of the Nyakyusa chiefs' lineage, though not of the most senior line. In the Rural Councils the presidents elected have all, with one exception, been ruling chiefs, but it is not necessarily the genealogically senior who is chosen. There is scope for selection on the grounds of character and ability.

[1] Five in the populous plain, Ntebela (MuNgonde).

[2] cf. Z. E. Kingdon, 'The Initiation of a System of Local Government by African Rural Councils in Rungwe District of Tanganyika', *Journal of African Administration*, vol. iii, 4 (1951).

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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177 The office of chieftainship still carries high prestige and the District Council has actually resolved to select a paramount chief. [643] Competition for this position is fierce and it remains to be seen [648] whether the Council will ever agree on a nomination. The persistent suggestion that the Administration should undertake the invidious task and select a paramount is scarcely likely to be acted upon, since the Administration sees no necessity for establishing such an office.

Chiefs, assisted by their village headmen, are the executive officers of the Rural Councils, but they have lost their judicial functions. There are twenty-four recognized courts with a bench [692] of 'courtholders' appointed annually by the Rural Councils, and [648] one superior court, but the annual appointment ceased in 1956 and more permanent appointments were made. The aim is to develop a specialized judiciary independent of the executive. There is also a very important class of full-time civil servants, secretaries of the District and Rural Councils, and clerks of the courts.

[622] The position of village headman is in a fluid state. Where the 'coming out' ritual has been dropped, the traditional occasion for the formal appointment of village headmen no longer arises, and old men continue in office much longer than before. When a headman dies his heir sometimes takes his position or, if neither the heir nor a junior son will accept it, some other man is appointed by the chief. There is evidence that in many chiefdoms men are reluctant to undertake the position, which carries no salary but involves a considerable amount of work and makes it difficult or impossible for a man to engage in paid employment either within or outside the District. As one woman put it, 'Money has killed the office of village headman' (*Indalama sigogile ubufumu*). There is some evidence from the lake-shore plain, however, of men competing for the office, and indeed of a son claiming in the courts the headmanship his father held. Possibly the competition for land on the plain, and the fact that the allocation of land lies with the village headman, account for this. When all the arable land is taken up, it is probable that acquisition will be [622] through inheritance or sale only, and the present headman's [423] power to allocate land is likely to vanish; but one of the most important assets of a village is its pasture-land, and in controlling and developing this the headman may well play a decisive part in the future. Since village headmen are essential executive officers in local administration, and are integrated into the new system of

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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particular symbols are tied to a particular social structure; the poet makes his choice within the whole range of the familiar.

The impetus to change has come both from the religious field and from the secular. For example, the pressure towards monogamy among the Nyakyusa has been religious; given plentiful land and cash crops additional wives are an economic asset, not a liability. In this respect the contrast with the Ciskei in South Africa, where families are dependent for food on wage-earners in towns, and no man can support two families,[1] is marked. On the other hand, the decay of Nyakyusa age-villages is primarily due to economic pressure, though it is facilitated by the insistence of Christians that there is no danger in father-in-law and daughter-in-law meeting one another. The first generation of Christians living on mission land built villages apart for their sons, despite the teaching that avoidance of a father-in-law by his daughter-in-law was foolish, if not sinful. But a radical change in pagan observance of ritual avoidance is brought about by the general practice of going out to work for long periods, and the competition for coffee and rice-lands, which makes the territorial separation of fathers and sons impossible. As we have shown, young men going to work commonly leave their wives in their fathers' homesteads, valuing the support and supervision given them there above the old stringency of avoidance and, where land is scarce and valuable, fathers do not move aside each generation to make way for their sons. Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law continues only in an attenuated form.

From German times control by a European government has compelled a modification of the traditional sacrifices to the heroes and of the ritual of chieftainship. How the Kinga priests came to Lubaga 'in secret' and how they failed to instal a new Lwembe after the death of Mwakisisya about 1914 has been described. Killing a child to anoint a drum or make medicine for the fields, compelling a man to accept a dangerous office, killing chiefs because they are ailing, or plucking off their nails before they die; all these are actions which are held, and must be held, to be 'contrary to natural justice' by any Western government. Here the change in political organization compels a change in ritual and there is evidence that belief in the traditional forms is much diminished, though not dead. The European government also

[1] Keiskammahoek Rural Survey. Vol. ii, *The Economy of a Native Reserve*, by D. H. Houghton and E. M. Walton; vol. iii, *Social Structure*, by M. Wilson *et al.*

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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found the administration of the poison ordeal, driving out people alleged to be witches, and killing supposed sorcerers 'contrary to natural justice'. Here the change is not in the celebration of a ritual but in the execution of 'justice' based on traditional religious beliefs.

The early missionaries were very important as employers of labour and a market for produce; indeed at one time they were the *sole* source of western trade-goods among the Nyakyusa. For long they provided the only skilled medical attention. They were the source of new learning, teaching, from the start, reading and writing and new manual skills, and the link between learning and religion, so familiar in the history of Europe, is still strong. Therefore acceptance of Christianity *tended* to go along with acceptance of the new economic and political structure, but it was never identified with it. Already in the thirties a popular song contrasted Christians with Europeans, and African nationalism was finding expression in 'independent' Churches.

Secularism fits as well with the new economic and political structure as Christianity, and it has been argued elsewhere that one of the characteristics of the change from a small-scale, isolated, self-sufficient people to a large-scale society is increasing secularism.[1] The evidence from BuNyakyusa does not so far support this, but there is a *separation* of religious and other activities. Religion is not interwoven with the modern political system as it was with the old. Traditionally the fusion between ritual and political activities was almost complete; village headmen became priests as they grew old, and chiefs became gods. Now there is a separation between Church and state, between Government and mission, which co-operate closely only in the organization of schools. It is true that Christian congregations pray regularly for 'those set in authority over us', but for the most part religious ritual does not enter into state functions. The flag is hoisted and saluted at sunrise and sunset at administrative and military centres; certain occasions, such as the Queen's birthday or the visit of the Queen's representative, the Governor, are celebrated with secular ceremonial. Only at the Coronation, to which African representatives from Rungwe district were sent, did the state ceremonial and the Christian ritual merge.[2] Political tension is not now directly

[1] R. Redfield, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, Chicago (1941); *A Village that Chose Progress*, Chicago (1950).

[2] 'The entire solemnity of the Coronation, from start to finish, is distinctly a religious rite.' Canon Charles Smyth, 'The Coronation Rite', *The Listener*, 28th May 1953.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
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expressed or resolved in ritual. The place for *ukusosya*—speaking out—is the council chamber not the sacred grove or the homestead where the shades gather, and the reconciliation of conflicts between chiefs, or between chiefs and District Commissioner or chiefs and commoners, is sought in a committee rather than a Church. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in modern administration in Africa lies in this very separation of activities, in the *thinness* of the bonds across the colour line, in the cleavage between secular and sacred. Some separation of the different aspects of a society is a concomitant of the increase in scale—it is one manifestation of specialization—but it is greater in Tanganyika with its diversity of religious traditions than it is in Britain with its common Christian history.

That there is a connexion between the form of faith and ritual and the form of social structure few would deny. The concern of the anthropologist is to define it; to plot the limits of autonomy between different aspects within societies. This can be done only by the patient analysis and comparison of many societies and this book is offered as a humble contribution towards such a comparative study.

631 628 Age-villages combined to form a chiefdom under the hereditary chief, *malafyale*, but active co-operation between villages thus associated was often slight; indeed in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed intermittent animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak – for example, when the Nyakyusa were attacked by Sangu and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in common defence. Similarly the land affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

631 162 None of the chiefdoms was large; smallness of scale is typical of Nyakyusa political organisation and social attitudes. In 1955 the smallest indigenous chiefdom contained only 36 men. In 1948 55,700 people were divided amongst about 18 indigenous chiefs, but undoubtedly had not the Colonial Government frozen the system there would have been rather more – at least five more. Today there are 12 recognised "administrative chiefs", amongst whom five have each less than 3,000 people under them, and the largest chiefdom contains fewer than 10,000 people – the average is just over 4,000 people.

631 361 Nevertheless the chiefdom, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the chiefdom villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the age-organisation there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. Their sons eventually came to comprise the core of the new chiefdoms.

642 643 796 428 In connection with the constitution of a Nyakyusa village and with land tenure, the significant feature of the chiefdom was its establishment, together with the induction of a new chief, at the great "coming-out" ceremony, *ubusoka*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons – the eldest son of each of the senior houses of the chief, i.e., of his first two wives. At the "coming-out" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chiefdom was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before this critical occasion – at which much important ritual was performed – the younger men of the old chiefdom had already moved away from their fathers villages and had established their own incipient villages nearby, each one containing a group of coevals. A Nyakyusa boy from the age of about seven years could not continue to live with his father and mother, but, in company with his equals, built his own hut on a site adjacent to the main village as indicated by the fathers' headman. Until the "coming-out" ceremony these youths' villages came under the control of the old village headmen; but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headman appointed from among its members by the old headmen. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and quite commonly the old villages, the older men, moved away a little in order to give the younger men adequate access to the land, for it was considered that the young men's needs for land were paramount.

621 342

631 178 622 643 888 After this wholesale reorganisation of the old chiefdom, when new villages were established and new boundaries demarcated,[1] the old chief himself, the old headmen and the older men (the "fathers") gradually retired from active public life. The old chief was supposed to commit suicide after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for his sons; the old headmen became the religious and ritual leaders of the new chiefdoms, with the flavour of elder statesmanship, and the old men's

1. 'At the "coming out" it is said that "everything is made new", boundaries are redrawn and the new chiefdoms and villages of the young men are ceremonially inaugurated'. Wilson, G., 1938, p. 31.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

plots of maize, squashes, tobacco, etc., and useful trees (bamboo, citrus, mango, kapok, *usyunguti* and firewood). Artificial drainage would, of course, make more land available along the rivers, but this is in general beyond the abilities and resources of the Nyakyusa without considerable outside assistance.

Finally, in this matter it is to be remembered that in addition to a man's arable holding, each of his wives has a banana plot at her house from which she obtains her staple foodstuff. Such plots amount to perhaps about a tenth of an acre on the average. On the other hand, the Nyakyusa are no longer prepared to tolerate a predominantly banana diet. Rice has, in most areas of the Lake Plains, become almost as important as bananas.

Large-sized Holdings

Some blame for this novel shortage of land and the smallness of the average holding has often been laid upon that minority of Nyakyusa who have exceptionally large holdings, and also upon the immigrants from beyond the Lake Plains who have come to settle there during the past decade.

The occupiers of large-sized holdings are rather fewer than has sometimes been supposed. The notoriety of large land-owners, such as some of the modern chiefs with as much as 25-30 acres, has brought more attention to them than is really warranted. Most chiefs and village headmen have arable holdings of above average size, as a result of their privileged positions in the land allocation system and because of their prestige influence; but they remain a small minority and their number is bound to decrease in the future as inheritance causes sub-division of their holdings, for most of them have also more than the average number of wives and sons. In the two high-density regions it is clearly impossible for any man much to increase his present holding. As will be shown later (see page 24) the modern trend is not unnaturally towards a dangerous fragmentation of holdings.

The data obtained in this matter for my eight village samples are summarised in Table III, page 15. In those villages the two men out of 372 who held more than ten acres were a village headman and the father of a chief.[1] There were seven other headmen and one chief as well as some other locally influential men amongst the people covered by my surveys, but none of them held more than ten acres. There are, of course, some commoners amongst the large land-holders; many of them are close relatives of the chief or headman and have thus received preferential treatment. Some, however, are ordinary villagers who were perspicacious enough to see future trends and to obtain land in the early days before most men realised its new value and when vacant areas were still easily available. Such men are tending to become a new, wealthy class, but on the other hand they are particularly susceptible to the begging of kinsmen and friends who have insufficient land. If they are not to be regarded as unneighbourly or even anti-social (perhaps practising witchcraft) they are virtually compelled to be generous sometimes, both with their land and with their profits.

On the whole this minority of men excites little attention or jealousy among the Nyakyusa, who indeed take it for granted that their chiefs and headmen will have more land than ordinary villagers, as befits their status and prestige. If it be thought that by reducing somehow the size and number of these unusually large holdings then the land shortage might be partly relieved, it is a false hope. I scarcely think that the Nyakyusa would welcome any such attempt at interference by administrative action, but in any case it would only provide minor and temporary relief here and there and would not be worth the executive difficulties involved.

1. This second man should be a chief himself but he was dismissed by Government on his imprisonment for peculation. He still holds much of the prestige and privilege of a chief for his son is only allowed authority in purely local government affairs.

as determined by the village headman. But even building sites with the essentially associated banana groves are becoming increasingly scarce and valuable, for no one desires to decrease the amount of arable by enlarging the built-up areas – rather the reverse. The number of young men's villages is therefore diminishing and congestion of their huts is increasing to the stage very often where no more than a narrow passage if left between adjacent houses. There comes to be a wider age range in the young men's hamlets where, often, a large village provides only one for all its sons. Smaller villages sometimes provide no accommodation at all for their sons, who are thus compelled to seek membership of a neighbouring group. These hamlets are mainly regarded nowadays as temporary residential areas for the young men until such time as they move on to an existing holding – their father's or some other. There is therefore no attempt to provide sufficient space for an adequate banana grove with each young man's house, let alone a food-crop plot behind it. The arable land beyond the congested huts already belongs to inhabitants of the main village. When a young man is able to leave and take up a holding, his vacated site (together, often, with the hut) is taken over by a waiting youth who has probably been sharing with another hitherto.

These young men's hamlets do not, any longer, eventually mature and become villages in their own right with their own headman and arable lands. Formerly, when this occurred, they would probably have taken over a good deal of the lands of the old village, as the young men exercised the privileges of their new maturity against their elders with the emergence of the new chiefdom. New chiefdoms, and with them new villages, no longer emerge, and this is mainly because Government has prohibited the bifurcation of petty chiefdoms on the death of the old chief, as it is considered inconsistent with the development of stable, modern local government. Additionally, however, the shortage of land can no longer allow of the traditional expanding politico-territorial organisation. The elder men's villages are not now prepared to yield ground to the young men, and the latter cannot expand elsewhere. Thus political requirements and land restriction work together to make the old system obsolete and to freeze the spatial distribution of villages as it existed in early European times. As far as I could ascertain in the chiefdoms of the Lake Plains, probably no new village had emerged in the past 20 or more years, except for a few cases of large ones splitting into two for administrative and social convenience. Many villages there date back to pre-European days often now under the son, or even the grandson, of the original headman (though this is not essential or invariable in any way).

The age-basis of the Nyakyusa village is thus disappearing; indeed, in many villages it has already disappeared in everything but the young men's hamlets. Where the process has gone least far, there is still apparent a rough division of the single village into the old men's sector (men at least 50 years of age, and many much older); the middle-aged men's sector (men between about 30 and 50 years old, being the younger brothers or elder sons of the old men); and the young men's and youths' sector. On inheritance, sons tend to show a continued reluctance to move and live on their father's house-site and to become immediate neighbours of older men; they avoid it if possible, often allowing a middle-aged man to shift there instead. Nevertheless even this sort of age-division is rapidly vanishing and in very many villages a man's neighbour may be of any age.

We have seen that inheritance is now one of the chief methods of obtaining land. Under the new inheritance rules, this means that sons follow their fathers and take up their fathers' arable holdings, building sites and banana groves. Some young men inherit early, others inherit late; there is no longer any notion or possibility of the younger generation entering into its

of the father. The old principle that every man had the right to arable land applied no less strongly to the young men, married or bachelors. Today most headmen will refuse to entertain the applications of young bachelors for land, and in this they merely represent general public opinion. But many young husbands likewise cannot obtain land, or only an insufficient amount.

Consequently, the following case-history, which I recorded for one young man, is not unusual. In 1955 he lived in the Mlangali young-men's hamlet, attached to Mpunguti village in Mwakipesile's chiefdom, where his father lives. He was about 27 years old and had a wife and one child. Twice he had been to work in the mines and from the profits of this employment he had completed his bridewealth payment and had bought, in addition, three cattle, a bicycle and some good clothing. He thought he would probably go away again. Behind his house his wife had about 300 square yards of bananas and there was a tiny patch of cassava. This man had no other land, but he assisted in the heavy labour on his father's holding (about 1.7 acres in all) and by family convention he normally took for his own use the paddy crop of a small strip there; he insisted, however, that he had not been given this strip outright and that it remained at his father's pleasure. He had an unmarried half-brother about 22 years old who had not obtained even that concession at the time. Their father was about 55 years old and had two other sons who were still boys. The young man himself had been refused an allocation of land by the headman on the grounds that (as the headman well knew) he had the use of this strip of his father's land, and also because, as the eldest son, he would be the principal heir on his father's death. He was clearly worried about his future, for he did not wish to go abroad again and leave his wife and child; but he did not see how he could stay at home without seriously lowering his standard of living to little above subsistence level.

I quote this brief case-history not necessarily as typical – though I think it probably is – but as an actual illustration of the present state of affairs as they affect an individual.

The Modern "Chief" and the Land

Most of the traditional chiefs, *abanyafyale*, have been recognised and salaried under the Native Authority, and they are officially referred to today as *abatwa* (s. *ntwa*). Some of the smallest chiefdoms have been absorbed administratively by their larger neighbours, and, although they are still recognised by the people, their *abanyafyale* have lost very much of their earlier prestige and authority. In the Lake Plains the modern chiefdoms are often rather larger than is usual amongst the Nyakyusa,[1] but they are, of course, small in comparison with the size of most African chiefdoms in Tanganyika.

The slightness of the traditional authority of the chief in land matters has already been noted (pages 7-8) and in general this still holds. In European times, however, the recognised chiefs have been given an increased authority and prestige as the local intermediaries between Government and people, and until recent years they were almost the only local instruments of the Government amongst the Nyakyusa. They have been backed by the all-powerful European, who preferred to deal with single, recognised individuals thought to have prime authority in a locality, and the European officer has been encouraged in this notion by an over-enthusiastic policy of indirect rule. Such chiefs were able to assume a degree of power well beyond the traditional limits, and to aggrandize themselves thereby. The ordinary commoner was never quite sure how far his chief was individually claiming more than he

1. On the numerical sizes of chiefdoms see supra, page 6.

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had authority to claim, or how far the Central Government was permitting or even compelling him to use new powers. Part of this novel power has, not unnaturally, been used to take over land-control responsibilities to which the chief has no traditional tribal right, and it has led to the claims, sometimes heard in the Courts and upheld in the District Commissioner's Appeal Court, that chiefs are the sole, traditional and rightful land authorities. It has led to chiefs assuming, or trying to assume, land allocation and supervisory powers which hitherto were the close right only of the village headmen.

Thus some chiefs have declared that they alone, or at least primarily, have allocatory powers over formerly uncultivated tracts which are relatively distant from the villages and which have now become valuable as paddy fields. Others have come to claim rights of interference in village land affairs, even within the long-established village areas. By the undefined threat of their alleged Government support, by taking advantage of new conditions, they have not infrequently "got away with it". They have insisted that their own nominees be allocated vacant holdings; they have gone over the heads of village headmen and made public their opinion as to who, amongst numbers of aspirants, should receive land in villages; they have insisted that headmen should consult them on the details of allocation. The desire for power and further prestige is one impulse behind this development. Sometimes the chiefs, better educated than many of their headmen, are able to understand the modern land situation better and are impatient of their headmen's conservatism and procrastination. Another factor is the potential profit which may accrue as land becomes scarce and thus a valuable commodity, and this became particularly important when the rush developed to take up the formerly vacant lands for paddy cultivation. Gifts in money and kind became common in return for preferential treatment for the donors. These lands are now all allocated and held by someone, but the chiefs have been reluctant to relinquish their new-found authority.

These remarks do not apply to all the chiefs: some have been notably content to use their influence through the traditional system by judicious co-operation with their headmen. Some, too, have been too imperceptive to bother to take action at all. Again, some have been forestalled by strong village headmen who would not allow any diminution of their own status and rights. In some of the fomerly vacant lands where no headman could reasonably claim traditional jurisdiction, the operations of the chiefs have probably been beneficial in reducing chaotic land-grabbing and jealous rivalry; once, however, these lands are brought under cultivation there seems to be a good case for their inclusion within the normal Nyakyusa land-control system. The continued existence of a supra-headman authority does not necessarily lead to stability or improved control. Certainly it is not in keeping with the people's values and institutions.

For these changes Government must clearly bear some responsibility and often also the blame for indirectly causing alterations in native land law and custom by some administrative attitude or ruling in a related sphere. There has been a good deal of well-intentioned insistence on determining and strengthening the "Land Authority" in tribal areas in the interests of stability and efficiency. In Rungwe District the facile claims of Nyakyusa chiefs have been only too readily accepted without question. In fact the traditional *umalafyale*, chief, only represented his chiefdom as a unit, and his lack of real power corresponded to the lack of cohesion within the chiefdom. The notion of a supreme "Land Authority" is largely incorrect for the Nyakyusa. In a theoretical sense we may perhaps say that the total land of a chiefdom was and is owned by all of the people in that chiefdom – chief, headmen and villagers; and therefore we may perhaps categorise the chief, the single individual representing the group as a whole, as the "land-owner." To

do this is however, seriously to strain the facts and values beyond what the average Nyakusa would understand or allow. The chief does not, as we have seen, allocate land either to villages as individual units or to the villagers separately; new, traditional villages obtained their land by allocation from the old headmen, and individual villagers were and are allocated their holdings by their own headman. The chief can act as arbitrator between villagers and villages, but his decisions have been notoriously difficult to enforce. Undoubtedly commoners resent the attempts by their chief to interfere in their own village affairs.

Now it may, of course, be desirable to widen and thus facilitate the scope of land authority, allocatory responsibility and equitable supervision, especially in the interests of a developing cash economy in a situation of a critical shortage of land. But if this significant change in native land law is to be introduced, it should surely be as a result of a proper appreciation of the facts and the existing law, and it must be in conformity with the interests and desires of the people themselves. It ought not to be a gradual sliding into a new situation as a result of other factors – as a by-product of local government development, for example, or as a matter of administrative convenience unsupported by real understanding. To make the chiefs the executive agents of the local government system does not necessarily mean – or it should not – that they should be passively allowed to usurp the land allocation powers of their headmen. Further, in view of modern Territorial policy aimed at bringing the people and their village leaders into the local government system, it seems perhaps unwise that at the same time chiefs should be allowed to assert non-traditional, autocratic land powers which are resented by villagers and headmen, and which may do little to improve the already difficult situation. When the additional powers of the chiefs are used at least partly, if not mainly, for self-aggrandizement or for personal profit, then it is a trend which needs to be strictly curtailed and controlled.

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some more land. How much could be made cultivable is beyond my appraisal, but it would be of valuable local assistance and ought not to be neglected. It does not, on the other hand, appear practicable to decrease further the amount of land used for building and village sites – the people themselves have already done this to some extent, and increased congestion in the villages would probably be undesirable on medical grounds.

There remain the local cases where part or all of a holding is not used (excluding genuine fallowing). An old man, or one who has for some reason lost the labour of his wives or sons, is sometimes unable to cultivate the whole of his fields. This is not common, or if it occurs the occupier is usually approached by his kinsmen, friends and neighbours for a loan or gift. Occasionally such land does remain relatively unutilised and the occupier refuses to release it even at the request of the headman. There is some feeling in the Lake Plains over this matter, and some men have suggested openly that such unused land should compulsorily revert to the village to be re-allocated by the headman.[1] Unless there is overwhelming demand for a new ruling here it would seem not to be a practicable policy and would only weaken security of land-holding and further increase the already over-exaggerated communal claim of the village. It would, of course, be difficult to assess when in fact a man had more land than he could or would cultivate, and it might easily lead to injustice if chiefs or headmen were given powers (however restricted) to interfere in a man's holding. Nevertheless headmen might be encouraged to keep a close watch on unused fields in their villages and to bring pressure to bear either to persuade the occupier to increase his efforts or to make temporary, witnessed loans to a neighbour.

In some cases land is left unused for a period whilst a man is away from home – usually while he is away at work. Where his absence is brief, little can or needs to be done, and already under Nyakyusa law the headman may authorise another villager to cultivate the fields on a year to year tenure: the absentee re-entering his holding on return. Occasionally, however, a young man may, for example, inherit land but then leave it for a number of years whilst he migrates to work in the mines. There is no adequate ruling as to the number of years' absence which should elapse before the absentee forfeits his land as an assumed permanent emigrant from the village. Headmen are reluctant to reallocate unused land for fear of the obvious legal and social difficulties should the absentee return, although some headmen are more hasty than others in this matter. Neighbours are often reluctant to borrow the land for fear of losing their opportunity of an outright allocation elsewhere in the village in the meantime. In some cases I saw fields which had lain unused for more than four years for these reasons. Like the unused portions of an old man's holding, these few cases arouse a good deal of land-hungry indignation, beyond their real importance in fact. Nevertheless some limit to the period of absence might well be introduced so that at least headmen know what their authority is in this matter, and so that men not prepared to work the land shall not be able to retain it indefinitely. It may be noted that the average length of absence of men in migratory labour is 18-24 months. A period of three years' continuous absence, at least without special cause, might perhaps be taken to indicate the automatic abdication of right of tenure.

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If more land cannot be made available – or only relatively little – the obvious solution is a more intensive and profitable use of the existing resources. The Agricultural Department has long urged this policy and is attempting to put it into effect, pointing out the relatively inferior yields of paddy in the Lake Plains because of poor techniques and inefficient effort.

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1. Significantly enough, one of the men to bring this suggestion to my notice was the Nyakyusa Senior Agricultural Instructor in the Lake Plains.

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This is not the province of the Sociologist, and all that can be said here is that it seems the most practical and valuable policy that could be adopted: it should be made the chief line of attack on contemporary problems. Unfortunately the Nyakyusa do not appreciate the value of this sort of solution – at least not yet – and therefore they are not inclined to learn and to increase their efforts and to change their practices in the fields. They have not yet rid themselves of the notion that increased production of crops and thus increased profits from agriculture are correlated only with increased holdings. In view of the critical land shortage a crucial change of attitude and understanding is required. The Nyakyusa must learn that increased production and higher profits can come from new and more efficient techniques – i.e. intensive cultivation. They must also learn what is so difficult for the African, that quality of production is no less important than quantity and that therefore cash incomes and standards of living can be raised by improving the standard of crops to be sold. Indeed, with a tendency for world agricultural prices to fall due to increasing supply, quality of produce is of the greatest importance. This is notably so in the case of rice. Tanganyika African rice is reckoned as of lower quality than that from South-east Asia, which therefore commands not only the better price but also the main share of the keenly competitive market. But it is a difficult idea for the Nyakyusa to grasp. It seems obvious to them, inheriting attitudes of a former subsistence age, that three poor cattle are better than two good ones – and in fact so they were in the hazardous time of their grandfathers. Cash crop production is based on the same premise, but it cannot hold in a modern cash economy and in dealings with world markets.

If, however, the present land shortage continues unchecked by the successful introduction of new attitudes, ideas and techniques there may well be serious social and political repercussions in the not too distant future. Current schemes of tribal development will surely be rendered futile if economic activity is restricted and if land discontent is allowed to become important.

A second agricultural policy, and one of which less is heard, would be to stop the present dangerous monoculture – the persistence with paddy alone – and to attempt on a large scale to introduce second and third cash crops, particularly such crops as require intensive cultivation on small acreages. This may be forced on the people in any case if the gloomy prognostications of world rice prices are borne out in the next few years. Such a development would allow of a more stable economy and a more balanced agriculture, in addition to assisting towards a reduction of land difficulties. Experiments on a small scale in robusta coffee, palm oil and other crops have already been started by the Agricultural Department but, at least from the layman's point of view, they need priority in finance, attention and effort as a main part of an agricultural programme for the Lake Plains.

In the time available for my investigations it was not possible to enquire with sufficient care into the details and exact procedure of Nyakyusa land law (*c.f.* page 3) and therefore I am reluctant to suggest any drastic changes. The new inheritance law (page 21) is a step in the right direction and is clearly in keeping with modern trends, but it is suggested that its detailed operation on the ground and in the courts should be studied by the Native Authority and the Administration in order to attempt to define its meaning more clearly and to reduce the number of disputes. In order to check fragmentation before it has gone too far, it should be considered whether some minimum limit might not be imposed on the size of fields. Voluntary schemes for the consolidation of holdings, which have achieved some success elsewhere in Africa, might also be considered. These would be particularly valuable in the

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Thus men wishing to move could seek to obtain, that is to buy, a holding from another man living in a village to which he is willing to move; a man leaving a village could either retain his holding in cultivation or obtain some compensation for the loss of his holding there. It is not likely that this would produce a rush of land sales, for only a relatively few men would wish to relinquish their holdings. It would, however, facilitate freer movement between villages. Secondly, it would assist younger men to obtain holdings when they have earned and saved money at work.[1] Thirdly, it would assist profit-making cultivators to enlarge their holdings. Fourthly, it would help to bring to the Nyakyusa a realisation of the implications of the new money economy which they have inevitably and irrevocably entered, and it would demonstrate the value of holdings in relation to other commodities and activities. This kind of system would allow the village to retain much of its valued unity and control whilst reducing its excessive and potentially harmful exclusiveness. Such disposals of land, especially if by money sale, could be performed before the headman and other reliable village witnesses and they could be registered formally at the local court. There would need also to be some ruling limiting the maximum size of holdings (to prevent excessive buying) and preventing alienation to Africans from outside the Lake Plains. In this matter the village headman would probably be the executive authority.

Although the suggestion could be introduced simply as a scheme enabling the buying and selling of land, I am here more concerned with the problem of freer movement and the limitation of the reversionary rights of the headman on behalf of the village, whilst retaining his useful controls. A more general recognition of the economic value of land would probably follow, and if it proved practicable and useful, an extended and refined scheme could be introduced later.

My suggestions are, then, as follows:—

1. (*a*) an immediate restriction of immigration into the Lake Plains from whatever origin, and the encouragement of the movement of people from the congested areas into the lightly populated areas, accompanied by local development programmes there;

(*b*) the consideration of the practicability of drainage and thicket clearance schemes in order to make more land available;

(*c*) the absolute abolition of land-holding by non-residents and the reallocation through the local headmen of land so held to local inhabitants;

(*d*) the sympathetic encouragement of village headmen to watch unused portions of villagers' holdings with a view to their voluntary and temporary reallocation to neighbours in need.

2. (*a*) a detailed enquiry into the operation and administration of the new inheritance law, with a view to improving its details;

(*b*) an enquiry into the possibility of imposing a minimum limit on the size of holdings and plots;

(*c*) the introduction of local, voluntary schemes for the consolidation of holdings.

3. Covering the whole field of Nyakyusa land problems must necessarily be a progressive agricultural programme aimed, firstly, at a more intensive and a more efficient use of the land by improved cultivation methods, and, secondly, the abolition of monoculture by the introduction of other cash crops. This is, of course, the policy of the Agricultural Department, but it needs more urgent application despite the obvious difficulties raised.

Stall-feeding of cattle, especially in the wet season, would assist to improve the living conditions of the herds and to increase their domestic and economic value.

1. It would also provide an alternative cash investment to the present purchase of cattle.

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352 415 two water jars, baskets, stools, a ladder leading to the loft, and a table. The rooms were large and spacious, 5 m by 14 m, and in two places low partitions were 353 used to effect a sub-division of the rooms. One may well wonder at the great length of these houses, but probably it is quite true what is said, that, when—in 392 177 1891—the Germans took charge of the region and imposed a tax on houses, the Nyakyusa men made their women move in under their own roofs—only at the same time extending the houses, using the technique they already knew from the cowhouses.

●648 178 342 Fülleborn reports on this payment of taxes, and finds it reasonable enough, because, he says, "it fosters in the people an understanding of work and discipline," and of the house tax he says, "it works to abolish polygamy, since every woman, following the traditions of her country, has her own house, for which her husband must pay the tax."

But the Banyakyusa seems to have adapted themselves to the new law and have moved their wives to the very long houses, thus escaping part of the taxes...

342 The third type of house was a rectangular house with a hipped roof. This type is called *ikuma*, which means tent. It was also called *itawo*, the meaning of which I have not been able to ascertain; maybe it means chicken-breast, to which it bears much likeness.

This is the modern house-type to which Fülleborn may be referring when he talks about rectangular houses, "- - the very rare instances when a hipped roof is seen - -." (page 375).

342 177 According to statements made by people who have lived in the district for a third of a century, this type of house is thought to have come from the south some 50 years ago. I have not visited the Ngonde who live farther south, but Sir Harry Johnston (1897) depicts a group of people called "Wankonde (North Nyasa)" in front of a house which looks very much like the modern *ikuma* of the Banyakyusa. It seems therefore reasonable to assume that the roof-construction design of the Ngonde has now reached the district of the Banyakyusa. Johnston also informs us that the rectangular type is not actually the original type in East Africa, but that it was probably introduced by the Arabs.

342 This *ikuma* or *itawo* is shorter than the long *ikibago*; seldom more than 11 metres in length. But its interior design does not differ. For instance, this holds true of the placing of the hearth, of the equal distance between posts supporting the roof, of the bamboo ceiling covering about half the room, of half-partitions from bamboo and in some cases mud, of store-rooms in the far end of the house, accessible through an inner door.

[597] In an *ikuma* I have never seen more than one hearth, which means that the house is inhabited by one woman. A house in the village of Kilasa presented an example of the peculiar tradition of the peoples of the Highlands, viz. the tying of the cattle to posts in the dwelling-houses. My drawings are all from the Highlands, where, in the *ikibago*, as also noted by Fülleborn, the same tradition is